

REMARKS

Claims 9 and 12 have been amended to add the word “intact” with reference to basement membrane. Support for this claim amendment can be found in the specification on page 5, line 10 through page 7, line 19 which describes the preparation of intact liver basement membranes. Claims 13-18 have been added. Support for new claim 13 can be found in original claim 9. Support for new claim 14 specifying “acellular” graft constructs can be found in original claim 9 and throughout the specification. Support for new claims 15-18 specifying graft constructs comprising “an isolated sheet of extracellular matrix tissue” can be found in original claim 9, on page 1, line 29 through page 2, line 2, on page 5, line 10 through page 7, line 19, and in Examples 3 and 4.

The Examiner has rejected claims 9 and 12 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Vacanti et al. The Examiner contends that Vacanti et al. discloses the removal of ear and nose tissues and the replacement of these tissues with a matrix coated with basement membrane. Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner’s rejection of claims 9 and 12 over Vacanti et al. Amended claims 9 and 12 are not anticipated by Vacanti et al.

Vacanti et al. describes biodegradable, synthetic, fibrous matrices upon which cells, such as chondrocytes, can be grown for subsequent *in vivo* implantation. The reference discloses that the synthetic matrices can be coated with compounds such as agar, agarose, gelatin, gum arabic, collagen, basement membrane components, and other compounds (see column 5, lines 58-68) to enhance the attachment of cells. Thus, Vacanti et al. does not disclose the repair of head and neck soft tissues with intact basement membrane as specified in amended claims 9 and 12. Rather, Vacanti et al. discloses coating the synthetic, fibrous matrices with compounds, such as basement membrane components, to enhance cell attachment. Accordingly, Vacanti et al. cannot anticipate amended claims 9 and 12. Withdrawal of the rejection of claims 9 and 12 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over Vacanti et al. is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing amendments and remarks are believed to fully respond to the Examiner's rejections. The claims are in condition for allowance. Applicants respectfully request allowance of the claims, and passage of the application to issuance.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Ball". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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